
Date: Feb. 22, 2021

To: Environmental Quality Commission

From: Richard Whitman, Director

Subject: Agenda Item 2: Smoke Management Plan updates (Informational)
March 3, 2021, EQC special joint meeting with Board of Forestry

Why is this important The purpose of this agenda item is to update the Board of Forestry and Environmental Quality Commission on the progress of rule implementation for the Oregon Smoke Management Plan including outcomes from the 2019 and 2020 fire seasons.

Prior EQC involvement In 2019, EQC adopted rule amendments to the Oregon Smoke Management Plan, which went into effect March 1, 2019.

Background The Smoke Management Plan is administered by the Oregon Department of Forestry to manage prescribed burning on private, federal and other public land to protect air quality and maintain forest productivity and health. ORS 477.013 requires the State Forester and the Department of Environmental Quality to approve a plan. The plan is to be developed by ODF in cooperation with federal and state agencies, landowners and organizations that will be affected by the plan.

Under OAR 629-048-0450(5), a review of the Plan will be conducted every five years. The primary purpose of this Smoke Management Review is to ensure the smoke management policy and program implementation is balanced in achieving the following two goals outlined in ORS 477.552:

- (1) To improve the management of prescribed burning as a forest management and protection practice; and
- (2) To minimize emissions from prescribed burning consistent with the air quality objectives of the federal Clean Air Act and the state of Oregon Clean Air Act Implementation Plan developed by the Department of Environmental Quality.

Following the adoption of the 2019 Smoke Management Plan rule amendments, DEQ incorporated revisions into the Oregon Clean Air Act State Implementation Plan, which is under review by EPA for approval. Key revisions include:

- Updating the definitions of “smoke intrusion” and “smoke incident,”
- Changing how smoke incidents and smoke intrusions are characterized,

- Allowing an increased size and thickness of polyethylene sheeting to be burned along with piled forest fuels,
- Promoting non burning alternatives,
- Adding a section on the necessity of safeguarding public health,
- Adding a statewide communication plan and
- Adding community response plans and exemption guidelines for smoke vulnerable and smoke sensitive receptor areas.

These new strategies are intended to improve integration of DEQ, ODF, and Oregon Health Authority agency objectives to both minimize smoke and emissions from prescribed burns while also providing maximum opportunity for prescribed burning as a responsible forest management and protection practice.

Both the BOF and EQC approved these recommendations in January 2019 and requested a progress report on the new rules approximately a year later. The BOF received an update in March 2020, but a previously scheduled EQC update was postponed due to COVID-19 and scheduling needs.

Content being presented

Implementation of the 2019 Smoke Management Plan is underway and staff will present on the status of the project, outcomes from the 2019 and 2020 fire seasons, and answer commissioner questions and concerns previously posed at the January 2019 EQC meeting.

Staff from DEQ, ODF and the Oregon Health Authority will present on:

- Goals of the Smoke Management Rule update
- Key changes to Oregon's Smoke Management Rules
- Creating opportunities for the use of prescribed fire
 - Smoke impacts – Intrusions vs. Incidents
 - Data on the use of polyethylene covers
- Role of fire in the ecosystem
- Timely and comprehensive communication
 - After Action Reviews
- Communication, Community Response Plans and Exemption Request
 - Bend: Community Response Plan and 1-Hour Exemption
 - 2020 Smoke Mitigation and Community Response Grants
- Best Burn Practices and Emission Reduction Techniques
- Smoke management outcomes for 2019 and 2020
- Alternatives to pile burning
- Coordination between partner agencies
- COVID-19 impacts on smoke management
- Safeguarding public health

EQC involvement This agenda item is informational only. DEQ, in coordination with the Department of Forestry and Oregon Healthy Authority will continue to provide updates on smoke management to the commission upon request.

Supporting materials

1. [Oregon Smoke Management Rules](#)
2. [ODF Smoke Management Directive](#)

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